

Barracks Row Fall Festival on Capitol Hill

Written by BRMS

Monday, October 01, 2012, 4:31 PM - Last Updated Monday, October 01, 2012, 4:33 PM

Happening at Barracks Row Fall Festival on Capitol Hill by Sharon Bosworth

A long time resident of the Barracks Row neighborhood, Joe Snyder is a watercolor artist, gifted at capturing the quirky, colorful architecture around us. He's a regular vendor at Eastern Market. On September 22, 2012 Joe participated in the Barracks Row Fall Festival on Capitol Hill and stopped us afterwards to report on the day. "First it seemed like a normal street fair— then I realized I was having a *really* great sales day – and then it dawned on me that I had not sold a thing to anyone from this area - everything I sold was to people who live in Northwest. For me that's a first!" Barracks Row Fall Festival 2012 was a first in many ways. Our neighborhood is shifting from being undiscovered treasure hidden deep in the shadow of the US Capitol to becoming a well regarded metro area destination with its own identity.

The 2012 Fall Festival further reflected our emerging sense of place by attracting a new festival partner/sponsor, the DC State Fair. Just days before the festival DC State Fair's press release went viral. It seemed everyone in town wanted to view the winning entry for the best new bike accessory contest (a green child seat) as well as witness the judging of the funkier vegetable grown in DC. That turned out to be Thurgood Marshall High School's Thai pumpkin. And no one could miss the moment when the best fruit pie in DC was revealed: Emily Dalphy's Fig and Grape Pie with Cognac and Orange.

Circus Acts - Fire House Olive Oil – Balloon Crowns

Trapeze School New York changed things up, too. This year they brought in not only aerialists on "Silks" but a complete circus trapeze apparatus and performers. By afternoon the fully costumed troupe was performing one trapeze routine after another as the hushed crowd marveled. Even with the colorful history of 8th Street, SE, there probably has never been a show quite like it in front of Senart's Oyster and Chop House.

This year families with children, National's fans, foodies, couples on day dates, attendees at the book fair on the Mall and anyone who was checking Twitter figured out by mid afternoon that something unusual was going on here and got themselves to 8th Street, SE, for a visit. Many were immediately met by a donkey on a leash. The famous Barracks Row Petting Zoo had stepped out – no political statement intended.

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Kids discovered Chesty, the fierce looking Marine Corps mascot, who loves to be petted under a shade tree. After the pumpkin seed spitting contest, Sidney, the Playseum's (545 8th Street, SE) wizard-on-stilts spent the afternoon creating balloon crowns that dreams are made of. Free tastings on the midway ranged from Scratch DC's samplings of home delivered organic meals to Sapore's booth where owner Renee Farr served a newly created Fire House dipping oil in honor of 8

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Street, SE's, finest, Engine 18(the store is the olive oil emporium at 605 Pennsylvania Ave, SE). Spring Mill Bakery sampled breads, cookies and cakes to appreciative new customers at its booth right in front of their bakery at 701 8

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Street, SE.

Barracks Row Volunteers – The Secret Sauce

The United States Marine Corps has had its home here at 8th and I Streets, SE, since 1801 - before Barracks Row, the corridor, existed. At Fall Festival 2012, Marine Barracks Washington sent in twelve Marines attired in regulation uniforms representing different conflicts from the long history of the Marine Corps. At the festival Marines stepped out of recent and past wars including the Korean War, World War II, World War I, the Civil War, War of 1812 and the Revolutionary War to visit with fair goers.

At the stage, Batala, an African-Caribbean female drumming group, performed to a crowd ten deep. Then Big Sky, a 40's era swing band delivered the sounds of Frank Sinatra and Tommy Dorsey as dancers filled the intersection of 8th and G Streets, SE. Blue-blazered college boys, the Georgetown Chimes, harmonized classic oldies barbershop style. Emcees for the day, Beth Fluto and Alex Espinosa kept things moving announcing acts and contest winners as Barracks Row volunteers on the midway sent tweets and texts of breaking news back to center stage. Unseen by fair goers, Barracks Row Main Street volunteers are the secret sauce behind Fall Festival!

The Pentagon Won!

For many years The Military Chef's Alliance has been a sponsor of our festival, hosting a black

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box cook off on the midway. This year the trophy for the Best Chefs in the US military was claimed by the Pentagon chef team. Both General Amos, Commandant of the Marine Corps and the Redskins Cheerleaders were there to congratulate the winning team. At next year's Fall Festival the Military Chefs Cook Off is celebrating its tenth anniversary with an appearance by Emeril and a parachute jump into Marine Barracks Washington.

Along with the DC State Fair and the Military Chef's Alliance Fall Festival sponsors include CSX which linked up this year with the Capitol Hill Garden Club for bulb planting. At the CSX booth kids and adults planted bulbs into large cups of nutrient rich soil. Those cups of bulbs will be planted in Barracks Row tree boxes later in the fall to beautify our street this spring.

Shout Out For Our Men in Blue

The Capitol Hill BID and the Capitol Riverfront BID were also both event sponsors along with National Capital Bank, Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of America and the Department of Small and Local Business Development. The Fall Festival foot print falls entirely within the Capitol Hill BID. Special thanks go to our "men in blue" from the Capitol Hill BID for returning the festival midway back into a sparkling urban corridor in record time.

From the earliest fall festival in 2002 until today we have partnered with United States Marine Corps. As true believers in this neighborhood they preceded us by centuries. We thank General and Mrs. Amos and Colonel Christian Cabaniss, commander of Marine Barracks Washington, for hosting tours of the Home of the Commandants and Marines Barracks Washington during the festival. And, as ever, we extend our heartfelt thanks and admiration to the Marine Corps volunteers who every year perform the true miracle of set up and tear down.

Next year's Fall Festival is September 28, 2013. By then Barracks Row will have become even more of a destination. Next year vendors, residents, businesses and visitors will experience fresh prosperity as Barracks Row Main Street continues its remarkable evolution. Mark your calendars and see you then!